

IDAHO BUSINESS REVIEW

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‘Boise’ scores again!

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Our wonderful capital city has again been recognized for what it is – a wonderful place to live. Selected from 2,000 locales, “Boise” joined Austin, Albuquerque, and Auburn, La Crosse and Loveland, and others in the annual U.S. News and World Report (July 2009) search for low crime, high-tech, easy lifestyle and good living amenities.

I put Boise in quotations because it truly is the valley that is the draw. The magazine write-up had mentions of “Alive After Five,” our “arts scene,” and a nice quote by Paul Hiller, executive director of the Boise Valley Economic Partnership. But people come to Boise for Boise, and also for quick access to rivers and lakes, the beauty of close-in farmland, and the treasures of Idaho City, Garden Valley, and other hour-drive meccas.

There was no mention of our awful urban sprawl, lack of rail, horrid rush hour traffic, or the evils of Eagle Road. Nor would there be. Some people have been other places and know those are non-issues. Only the “we suck” crowd cries constantly trying to fix what is not broken and create what is not needed.

Not to miss the real story here, we need to look closely at our comparator cities. First listed is St. Augustine, Fla., and admittedly I have never been there. It sounds great, though. But the others listed above I know pretty well, and they are great locales, and truly great places to live.

Here locally we are too often compared with Portland or Salt Lake City, citing what they have as what we should have. Those are nice cities and I enjoy both for visits, but for living, Boise is tough to beat. By comparison, La Crosse, Wis., is also a college town, with great recreation and outdoor options. But it is only 50,000, thus denying many choices we have, and the winters are wicked cold.

Loveland is also small by comparison but Denver and Ft. Collins are easily had, and the whole outdoors is at your doorstep. It is a pretty magical place, but again we lose the “city” part of it. Meanwhile, Albuquerque and Austin, both over a half-million people, are great choices. I have spent time in both and they are jewels. Boise could well aspire to grow in those directions.

While Boise is by no means perfect, it is nice to see it recognized for what it is – a great place to live. Of course much of great living is attitude and we can choose to appreciate what others see that we have, or we can join the “what would Portland do” crowd and “progress” our town right off the list.

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